

Introduction/ Study Rationale

SAVAN, or Statewide Automated Victim Assistance & Notification, is a computer network created with the goal of providing knowledge of offender movement to victims of crime. Operational in 98 of the state's 100 counties, SAVAN has been assisting victims of crime for four years. It is available 24 hours a day and notifies victims anytime their respective offenders change location. Also, counties that provide SAVAN services can in turn offer any victim the ability to call the network for court dates. Victims can either call the network for offender information or register for immediate notification whenever the offender is moved.

Through the SAVAN initiative, North Carolina is confronting the issue of repeat offenders of violent crime and their recurring victims. In the year 2002 alone, 1,125 sex offenders were registered in North Carolina's counties. This registration allows the victims of these crimes the ability to find security knowing where their offenders are located. To address the problem of notifying victims of changes in offender custody, and allow them to have up to date offender custody information, the Governor's Crime Commission implemented SAVAN. During the four years that SAVAN has been in use, 30,238 victim registrations have occurred which equates to an average of 630 registrations per month or approximately 21 per day. Also, a total number of 430,605 incoming calls and 1,169,302 outgoing calls have occurred within this four-year period. This equates to an average 8,971 incoming and 24,360 outgoing calls per month. On a daily basis the system averages approximately 299 incoming calls and roughly 812 outgoing calls.

In an effort to improve resource allocation, provide data for policy and program development and to provide the Crime Commission with feedback on its programs, the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center, which is the research and evaluation section of the Crime Commission, conducts process and impact evaluation studies. This report presents the findings of a process and impact evaluation of the SAVAN system. This SAVAN evaluation was conducted not only to receive information on network activity and usage but also in an effort to gather information concerning the process of establishing and maintaining the system; as well as to document the extent of its impact upon victims of crime, law enforcement and jail operations, and prosecutors' offices.

Overview of SAVAN

SAVAN is a product of the Appriss Company. The Appriss Company, located in Louisville, Kentucky, pioneered victim notification systems nationally with their victim information and notification everyday (VINE®) system and was hired as the contractor to develop the SAVAN network for North Carolina. The system allows for information to be received about any offender behind bars in the majority of the state's county jails or all Department of Correction facilities located in North Carolina. The information is in fact routed through Appriss in Louisville before the victim is alerted.

The following frequently asked questions, or FAQs, from the SAVAN website provide an informative and concise overview of the registration and notification processes.

FAQs

What is SAVAN?

SAVAN (Statewide Automated Victims Assistance and Notification) helps victims of crime get custody status and court information about offenders. It is a free 24-hour per day telephone service that is available in both English and Spanish. In addition, SAVAN automatically notifies registered victims of important events, such as the release of an inmate or scheduled court event.

How does SAVAN work?

SAVAN is a fully automated computer service that electronically links a National Call Center to offender custody status and court information. When new offender information is sent to the SAVAN Call Center, SAVAN compares the offender information to a list of victims who have previously registered with the service. When it finds a match it immediately places calls to the appropriate registered victim(s).

Which offenders are monitored by SAVAN?

- Offenders who are listed in North Carolina State and county correctional facilities, or who are under community supervision, or whose cases are pending at the district attorney's office.
- An offender may be released on bail or released on their own recognizance during arraignment. These individuals may not be considered in custody.
- SAVAN **does not** :
 - a. Monitor offenders being held at a police precinct or other local police facilities.
 - b. Track offenders who have "bonded out" of custody at the magistrate level and are never booked into jail.
 - c. Track offenders housed within juvenile or mental facilities.

Who can use the SAVAN service?

Anyone, family, or friends or other concerned persons, may call the SAVAN hotline for custody status information. In addition, anyone may register for custody change notification directly through the SAVAN hotline. *Only victims of crimes designated for services by state law may register for court event notification.*

How do victims get information and register?

- Victims call 1-877-NCSAVAN and follow the prompts to hear current custody status information and register for automated notification.
- Only victims of crimes designated for services by state law may register for court event notification. Victims should contact the local district attorney's office for more information.

What should I tell victims about SAVAN?

Victims should know that SAVAN is a free service that is available to assist them in determining the status of an offender. All SAVAN telephone registrations are anonymous and confidential. A SAVAN brochure is provided to victims with information on how to use the SAVAN service.

What if the offender is released from jail or prison outside of regular business hours, for example midnight on a Sunday?

The SAVAN service operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year including holidays. Any change in an inmate's custody status will prompt the SAVAN service to call all registered victims and parties who are concerned about that particular inmate's location, regardless of the day or time. Even if an inmate is released during non-business hours, all involved victims and parties will get a call from SAVAN.

Methods

Criminal Justice Agency Survey

A 22-question survey, containing both process and impact sections, was developed and administered by mail with follow-up data collection by fax and phone queries. The survey instrument contained nine process questions, such as: "Are there any concerns/ problems that you have about this network and the process of registration or notification?" These questions were aimed at exploring the SAVAN processes such as installation of the network, and the registration of victims. The next 13 questions dealt with the perceived impact of SAVAN on the victim, law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices. Questions such as: "What do you see as the most beneficial outcomes of the state SAVAN initiative," were included.

Victim Survey

In an effort to elicit the impact of SAVAN on its primary users, i.e. victims who are currently registered with, and using, SAVAN, the Appriss company developed a client feedback telephone module containing both process and impact related questions. Randomly selected SAVAN users were asked a series of questions, via an electronic recorded message script, with their respective responses being stored in an automated database. Two distinct message scripts were generated; one for registered users who had received prior court notification calls and one for users who had received prior calls regarding offender movement within the jail/correctional system.

Criminal Justice Agency Sample

Surveys were mailed to 98 sheriff's offices excluding Gaston and Watauga Counties which do not currently use automated victim notification procedures. Thirty-nine additional surveys were mailed out to the state's district attorneys.

Victim Sample

A random sample of phone numbers belonging to registered SAVAN users was generated with new victims, who had not received prior notification calls, being excluded from the sample. Registered users were partitioned into two groups – those who had received prior court notification calls and those who had received prior calls related to offender movement within the jail and correctional system. Given the costs associated with this method it was determined that ideally 100 completed surveys would provide sufficient victim feedback regarding the SAVAN system and its perceived impact on its primary users. A maximum of 500 calls were attempted in order to generate completed surveys from victims who had received prior court notification calls. The same number of attempted calls were made to compile completed surveys from victims in the jail/correctional offender movement group.

Results

A total of 47 completed surveys were returned to Analysis Center staff with 29 responses being obtained from sheriffs' offices (29.6 % of the 98 surveyed) and the remaining 18 being forwarded by the state's district attorneys (46.2% of the 39 surveyed). This equates to a 34.3 percent return rate across the surveyed criminal justice agencies. Responses from the sheriffs' offices were evenly distributed on a geographical basis with roughly one-third of the responding offices being located in the western portion of the state, one-third in the piedmont and the remaining one-third in the coastal region of the state. The greatest participation rate from the prosecutors' offices was found in the piedmont region (41%), followed by the coastal area (35%) and those offices located in the western counties (24%).

Random phone calls were conducted until either 500 attempts were made or 50 completed surveys were obtained from registered users in the court notification group. The same procedure was used for those victims in the offender movement group. A total of 41 completed surveys were obtained for the court notification group with 42 being obtained for the offender movement group.

Installing, Operating and Maintaining the SAVAN system (Process Evaluation)

As part of the process evaluation component survey respondents were asked to rate the level of awareness, within their respective communities, of SAVAN and its role in the victim notification process. The majority of the respondents (58.7 %) noted that their respective community members possessed some awareness of the SAVAN system and its existence as a resource for crime victims. Slightly more than twenty-eight percent reported a solid awareness with 6.5 percent noting a strong awareness of SAVAN. Only three respondents reported (6.5%) that their

community residents had no awareness of the system. Thus, 93.5 percent of those responding to the survey felt that their community members had at least some level of awareness regarding SAVAN and its role within the criminal justice system.

Respondents were asked to delineate the most beneficial, and by contrast, the least beneficial aspects of the state's SAVAN system. A clear majority (65.1%) noted that the most beneficial feature of the system is the provision of information to victims regarding their specific court cases and the custody status, or location, of their respective offenders. Seven respondents (16.3%) suggested that the most beneficial aspect was that the system provided victims of crime with a greater sense of security with three respondents (7%) noting that SAVAN extends the level of protection afforded to its registered users. Other benefits included: improving victim involvement in the process; i.e. making the victim a part of the criminal justice system, and offering a more convenient and easier method for quickly obtaining relevant court and custody status information. Only one respondent offered a benefit that was not directly related to victims; i.e. the system is most beneficial for allowing the district attorneys' offices to carry out their mandate of notifying crime victims. Thus, overwhelmingly the respondents noted benefits which are directly related to the victims and their specific cases. Illustrative comments included:

- “ It keeps the victim informed of the defendant's court dates or prison release dates.” “ It's especially beneficial to victims of violent crimes.”
- “ Custody notification.”
- “ The most beneficial aspect of the state's SAVAN network is that victims feel safer knowing the status of offenders who have victimized them.”
- “ For victims that are truly afraid it is a safeguard for them.”
- “ Victims being able to keep apprised of offenders' status in correctional systems.”
- “ This is a great service to help keep victims informed as our office does not always know where a defendant is.”
- “ It is for the victims.”

Conversely, the least beneficial aspects clustered in three response sets with seven (23.7%) respondents noting that SAVAN suffers from a lack of public awareness. This finding is contradictory with the survey participants' prior responses suggesting that further exploration may be needed in order to obtain a more accurate depiction of how well known SAVAN is among the general public. It may be indicative of a greater level of awareness among former registered users and others who have come into contact with the local criminal justice systems versus members of the general public who have not had direct contact with the courts.

Technical problems and existing gaps in the available information, such as a first continuance date and then a custody intake date without any data on the court trial date, were noted as

problematic. Each of these deficiencies were noted by 13 percent of the responding sample. Overall, 24 (51.1%) of the 47 survey participants responded by offering at least one negative or least beneficial feature of the system. Other responses included:

- ◆ “ It is least beneficial for victims of misdemeanor assault that go to district court because these cases are usually set a few days after the offense date.”
- ◆ “ The least beneficial aspect of the network is not so much the network, but more so the victim. Such as the victim not having a permanent phone number as they are continuously moving or not having a phone at all.”
- ◆ “ We have had problems with registered victims saying they were not notified of release.”
- ◆ “ Victims don't understand how to use, don't take the time to read SAVAN information.”
- ◆ “ Delays in data entry.”
- ◆ “ Down time when computers are malfunctioning.”

As part of the survey participants were asked to rank SAVAN on a variety of process measures including the victim notification process, registration, SAVAN installation and maintenance, and fiscal management. Respondents were asked to rank 11 process factors on a 10 point Likert scale ranging from one (poor) to 10 (outstanding).

Overall, the respondents rated the process aspects of SAVAN quite highly with eight of the 11 factors receiving an average score of seven or greater. Two aspects received an average ranking between six and seven with only one item receiving an average score below the scale midpoint of five.

As Figure 1 reveals the highest rated, or most impressive, process components were: the responders' agencies relationship with Appriss/VINE, i.e. the provision of technical assistance ($X=7.56$), the responsiveness of the SAVAN system operators ($X=7.35$), the accessibility of services ($X=7.29$), and SAVAN maintenance and troubleshooting ($X=7.28$). The fiscal management of the SAVAN system ($X=7.18$), the actual notification process itself ($X=7.07$) and the development and installation processes ($X=7.04$) were also perceived to be highly effective.

Survey participants noted that SAVAN was an efficient use of resources as indicated by an average ranking of seven. The process of making victims aware of SAVAN ($X=6.3$) and the victim registration process ($X=6.06$) received slightly lower average scores but were still nonetheless higher than the scale midpoint. The lowest process measure was obtained for community mobilization ($X=4.78$) which suggests that the SAVAN system has not exerted a strong impact on mobilizing or focusing the community's attention and resources on the process of notifying and informing crime victims.

Figure 1 Perceptions of SAVAN – Process Related Features (Average Ranking)

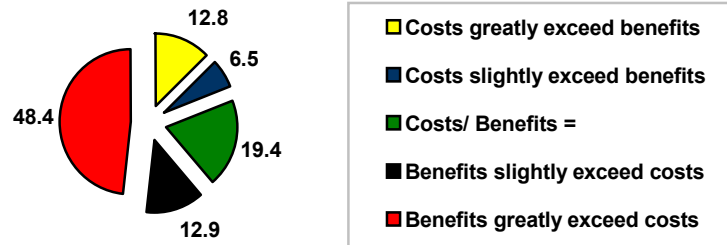
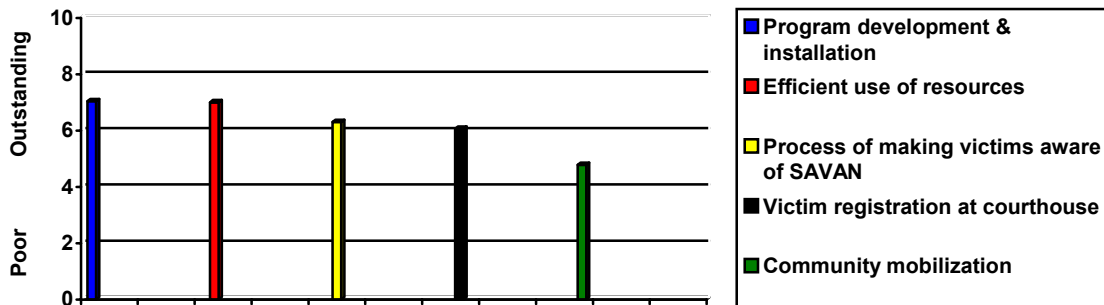


Figure 2 Perceptions of SAVAN – Process Related Features (Average Ranking)



Survey respondents were also asked to provide their overall impressions, of the SAVAN system process, along the same Likert scale with individuals responses covering the entire one to ten scale. Only three, or 7.5 percent, of the respondents rated the SAVAN system process less than five, with seven or 17.5 percent, rating the system at the scale of midpoint of five. The remaining respondents' (75%) perceptions of the entire process of installing, maintaining and operating SAVAN were given rankings of five or greater. The average ranking on the respondents' overall impressions of the SAVAN process was 7.38.

As part of the process evaluation a questionnaire item was included which asked respondents the following question: "Are there any concerns/problems that you have about the network and the process of registration or notification?" Twenty-two (46.8%) individuals responded in the

affirmative with the most common concern/problem revolving around the victims' lacking an adequate knowledge of the system, its functions and operations. Thus, over half of the respondents (53.2%) did not possess significant concerns or had not noted any substantial problems as indicated by a non-response to this question. Other problems which were reported by more than one survey participant were: not knowing if the victims were receiving notification and confusion surrounding court dates.

The remaining respondents, who reported concerns or problems, offered unique answers to the question. Single and individual responses included: not using SAVAN enough to know, more work for an already overworked staff, hard to reach an operator, calls don't stop, victims have to reregister, late notifications, having to repeatedly login due to the system being down and a need for more training. Specific and informative quotes are provided below:

- ❖ “ Court notification process gets mixed up because of order in which clerks enter events – sends confusing message to victims.”
- ❖ “ The process of victims having to reregister each time offender's status changes is a concern.”
- ❖ “ My only concern is that some people are not receiving their notification calls.”
- ❖ “ Victims do not read SAVAN information that is given to them.”
- ❖ “ I have been told by victims that calls of notification concerning court dates come in after the actual court date.”
- ❖ “ Several victims have complained that even after they entered the PIN the system continued to call. One case was murder and the victim's family was upset.”
- ❖ “ It is sometimes difficult to follow the steps to access information.”

Respondents were given the opportunity to freely express their views and opinions regarding the process of starting, maintaining and operating the SAVAN system within their own communities. A variety of comments were received with the most frequently occurring responses indicating an overall level of satisfaction with the system. Twenty-eight percent of those who responded to the question noted that the SAVAN processes were basically running very smoothly with little, or no, significant problems being apparent. An additional 10 percent reiterated this finding by noting that the system was very helpful and useful. The second most common comment revolved around program promotion with 15 percent of the survey participants noting that they thought SAVAN should receive more publicity.

Other comments included: the need for more training and collaboration, a suggestion to offer the workshops on an on-going basis as they were very useful in the past and that the system and SAVAN processes are very user-friendly. A few negative comments were reported with

respondents noting that the SAVAN system did not get off to a good start in their jurisdiction while another noted that no notifications had transpired. One participant stated that they are no longer using the system for court notifications. Illustrative quotes regarding the process of starting, maintaining and operating SAVAN are offered below:

- “ I think that SAVAN needs to be addressed from all aspects for all agencies – more of a collaborative effort. From the beginning I felt that we should be aware how each agency is involved with SAVAN and what part they play.”
- “ The original educational workshops were excellent as well as the materials provided – ongoing educational workshop may be a good community awareness project.”
- “ I am surprised we got this service as quickly as we did as we are a poor county and usually last in getting services.”
- “ Our training was good and the staff that maintain the system is good. We just don't know how/if the victims are using the system or not.”
- “ There needs to be more public awareness of SAVAN, i.e. commercials, ads, etc.”
- “ We were one of the pilots so our experiences were good as we had input from the beginning.”
- “ The piece of mind for the victims is good but getting them registered is the problem.”

Respondents were also encouraged to freely express their views and opinions about any problems or negative aspects associated with the SAVAN processes and were specifically asked to offer recommendations for improving the system. The most frequently reported recommendation for change was to increase the level of public awareness with 16 percent, of those who answered the question, offering this advice. Ten percent noted that work should be done to develop an easier method for getting the calls to stop.

The remaining responses included: easier/ better maintenance, problems with offenders being “stuck” in the system, the need to develop and implement a multi-language system, the need to alert the victim to an offender's temporary status, delays in notification and a desire to see a secure Internet site for victims to monitor their respective cases. Specific comments are highlighted below:

- “ Need for more advertising, make it easier to register. ”
- “ Letting the public know that it is available. ”

- “ Indicate when defendants are temporary and include bond information. ”
- “ Making sure people are not stuck in the system when computers go down. ”
- “ If possible notify all victims. If a victim does not want to be notified let that person know that it can be stopped.”
- “ Develop a better way of tracking how many times the automated system has attempted to contact a registrant. After a certain number of attempts an alternative method is used. ”
- “ System would be better maintained with a department which has more personnel available – such as the clerk of courts office. ”
- “ Does not work for jail cases. Recommend further training for jail personnel, they don't even know what SAVAN is. ”

SAVAN: Benefits, Impact and Perceived Effect (Impact/ Outcome Evaluation)

The following section will present findings that specifically address the impact and benefits of the SAVAN system on a variety of measures and across numerous sectors of the criminal justice system, crime victims, and the community in general. Survey questions were designed to elicit input regarding the efficacy of the SAVAN network and to ascertain the respondents' perceptions regarding the effects of the system.

The survey participants agreed that the SAVAN system has substantially improved the ability to track offenders for both members of the criminal justice system and for crime victims and their families. Eighteen respondents (42.9%) suggested that the system has had a great impact in this area with another 13 (31%) noting that it has exerted an average level of impact. Nineteen percent felt that it has demonstrated a minimal impact with the remaining 7.1 percent noting that SAVAN has had no impact on improving the effectiveness of tracking offenders and determining their location.

Seven factors were identified based upon the goals and objectives of the SAVAN initiative with the respondents being asked to rank each on a 10 point scale ranging from one (no impact) to 10 (great impact). All of the seven factors received average rankings above the scale midpoint of five suggesting that the system has exerted a positive and strong impact and is achieving its stated goals and objectives. The two primary goals of enabling victim notification to occur, and to make this process less burdensome on local criminal justice agencies, (X=6.80) and the goal of increasing victim awareness, regarding the location of offenders, (X=6.85) received the highest average scores. The goal of informing victims of their respective court cases received an average impact score of 5.92 with the actual impact of SAVAN on the local criminal justice system receiving a slightly higher score of 5.97. Thus the findings validate the assumption that the SAVAN network is

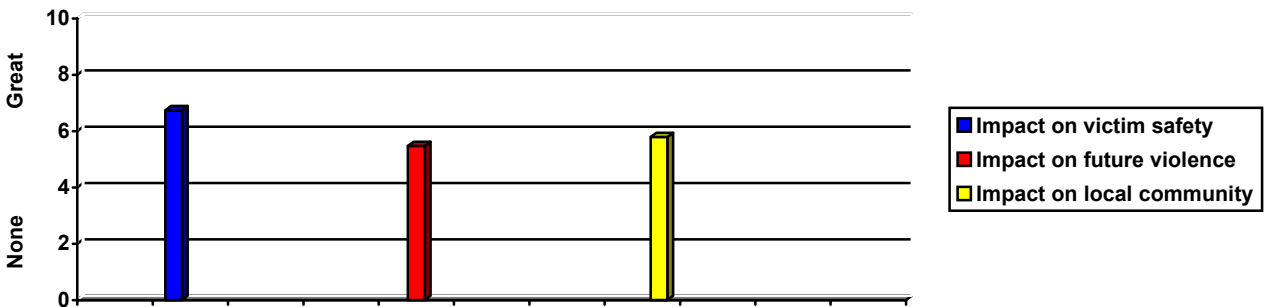
accomplishing one of its intended purposes and demonstrating an above average impact on reducing, or minimizing, the workload of the local criminal justice agencies as related to victim notification (Refer to Figure 3).

As Figure 4 depicts SAVAN is also exerting a substantial positive impact on its primary customers, i.e. victims of crime. The perceived impact of the network, on enhancing and maintaining victim safety, was considerable with an average ranking of 6.74 being reported. Other secondary goals, and even unintended or unexpected positive goals, are also being attained. The system is exerting an above average impact on the local community ($X=5.79$) and is also perceived to be somewhat effective at reducing and preventing future acts of violence between the registered victims and their offenders ($X=5.47$).

Figure 3 Impact of SAVAN on Local Criminal Justice System



Figure 4 Impact of SAVAN on Victims and Local Community



Survey participants were also encouraged, through an open-ended question, to list what they perceived to be the most beneficial aspects and impact of the SAVAN network. The majority of the respondents stated that the SAVAN system has been the most beneficial and has had the greatest impact on victims of crime. Thirty-six percent noted that the most significant benefit has been allowing victims the opportunity to know where their respective defendants are located. Twenty-eight percent stated that the network has been the most beneficial for improving victim

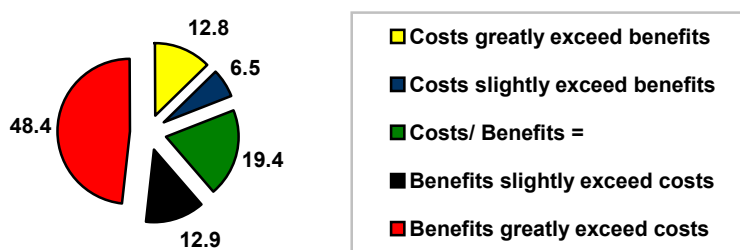
safety while a similar 14 percent felt that SAVAN is helpful because it enables the victims to have a greater sense of security and “peace of mind.” Eleven percent felt that SAVAN was most beneficial in that it enables victims to track their specific court cases.

As with the process evaluation questions an item was included in order for the respondents to note any negative outcomes or any unintended and unexpected, yet undesirable, impact. Only 15, or 31.9 %, of the completed surveys included responses to this question of which most were process related versus actual benefits, impact and outcomes of the SAVAN network. Responses were varied and did not tend to cluster or group easily as most responses were specific to individual jurisdictions and respondents. Comments included: an inability to make notification calls cease, hard to reach system operators, poor system reliability, confusion regarding the nature of calls and the lack of punishment for offenders.

Basic cost-benefit aspects were included in the study in an effort to further delineate the fiscal impact of SAVAN and determine respondent perceptions regarding the amount of funds expended by their offices and how much it would cost their respective offices to carry out the mandate of victim notification should SAVAN not exist.

As Figure 5 reveals nearly one-half of the respondents felt that the benefits of SAVAN greatly exceed the costs associated with the system. An additional 12.9 percent suggested that the benefits slightly exceeded costs while 19.4 percent believed that costs and benefits were equal.

Figure 5 Perceptions of SAVAN - Cost/Benefit Statement



An overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.1%) noted that their offices are not currently expending any SAVAN related funds thus demonstrating the significant cost savings for the local sheriffs' and prosecutors' offices. However, should SAVAN cease to exist an entirely different perspective emerges with the victim notification requirement reverting back to the local criminal justice agencies resulting in increased costs in this area. The amount of this shifting cost varied from an estimated \$ 300 per month to \$ 25,000 per month depending on primarily the number of victims in an area and staffing requirements. The average cost for the local agencies to pick up

victim notification, should SAVAN become inoperable, would be \$ 7,118 per month or \$ 85,416 per year.

Without SAVAN all 100 sheriffs' offices would be required to notify victims regarding custody status and all 39 district attorney offices would be required to do the same for court notifications. Consequently, this would produce an annual, combined expenditure of \$ 12,264,276

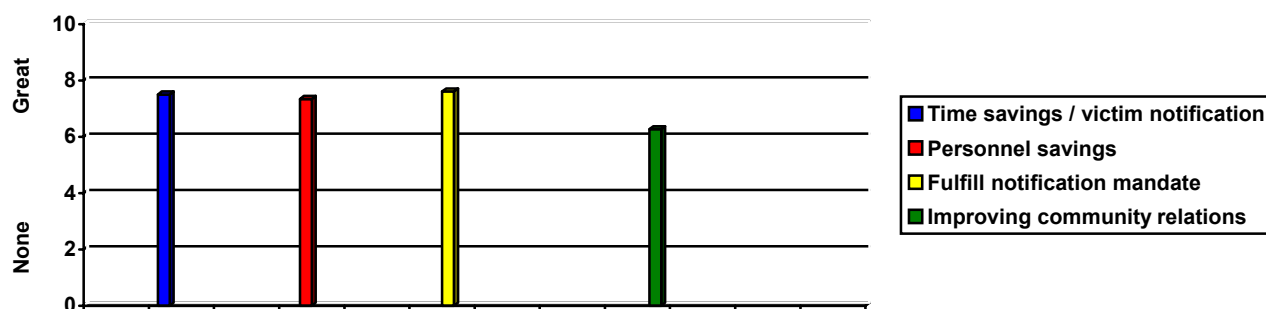
for local governments (sheriff's office annual average of \$ 98,508 x 100 offices + district attorneys' annual average of \$61,884 x 39 offices). The current annual cost for a single, state operated automated notification system is \$ 1,170,720. Contrasting this cost against the cost of 139 local and autonomous notification systems reveals the tremendous cost savings produced by the existence of the SAVAN network.

Eighty percent of those who completed the SAVAN questionnaire felt that the network was either effective or very effective for assisting the state's crime victims. Only eight respondents (20%) countered by noting that the system proved to be only a little effective or not effective at all in this area.

Respondents were asked to provide rankings on four criteria that addressed the direct benefits of SAVAN on their respective agencies. A 10 point scale, ranging from one (least beneficial) to 10 (most beneficial), was used for identifying these agency-specific benefits of SAVAN. These four factors included: the reduction of time involved in victim notification, personnel savings, fulfilling the notification mandate and improving community relations. As Figure 6 depicts all four variables received average rankings above the scale midpoint of five with the most significant benefit being that the SAVAN system enables local agencies to meet the victim notification mandate as delineated in the state's Victims' Bill of Rights (X=7.61).

SAVAN was also perceived to be beneficial for reducing the amount of time that agency personnel devote to notifying victims of their respective offenders' locations (X=7.50) and for reducing the number of personnel which would be required to perform these duties (X=7.34). The perceived improvement in community relations, as a consequence of SAVAN, was also rated as being above average (X=6.27).

Figure 6 SAVAN Benefits – Agency Specific



Direct benefits to crime victims were also assessed as part of the SAVAN process and impact evaluation with seven factors being included in the survey instrument. These questions addressed the benefits of registration, alerting crime victims to potential danger, notification of court dates, offender location and movement; as well as accurate notification and the prompt termination of calls. The same 10 point Likert scale was used to assess these victim-specific benefits of SAVAN. Figures 7 and 8 present the direct victim-specific benefits with all scores receiving average rankings greater than the scale midpoint. Indeed, the scores were considerably high ranging from 42 percent, above the midpoint, to 58 percent above the middle of the scale.

The greatest victim benefit was reported to be prompt and timely termination of calls once the victim entered the correct PIN number into the system ($X=7.88$). Registration ($X=7.61$), accurate notification as defined by the correct person receiving notification ($X=7.47$) and the receipt of prompt notification at offender movement ($X=7.28$) were all noted as substantial victim benefits.

The notification of offender court dates ($X=7.21$), a lessening of victim concern regarding offender location ($X=7.11$) and alerting victims to potential and future danger ($X=7.08$) also emerged as important victim-specific benefits which are being derived from the SAVAN system.

Figure 7 SAVAN Benefits – Victim Specific

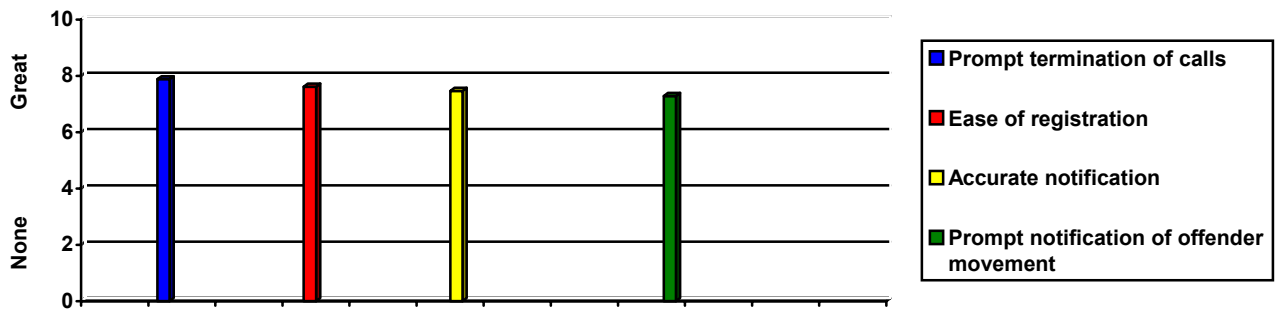
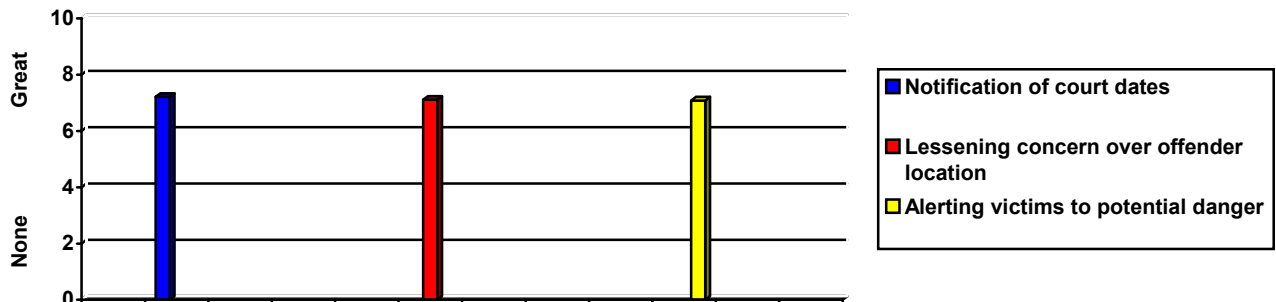


Figure 8 SAVAN Benefits – Victim Specific



As part of the survey the participants were given the opportunity to freely respond to the following question: "In your own words please tell us your overall impressions of the state's SAVAN effort." The largest number of comments (30.6%) revolved around the system's benefits to both the law enforcement community and to crime victims. Producing a safer state, or placing victims at ease, (13.9%) and an overall positive impression of the entire network (11.1%) were also mentioned. Other responses included: could be better, improved information exchange between parties, generates more work and good concept just need to improve with focus on custody notification versus court notification. Specific and selected comments are provided below:

- "It works very well for my victims."
- "I personally feel that the state SAVAN network is remarkable." The system allows many victims to sleep at night and to go on with their lives as normal as possible."
- "I think the SAVAN network had good intentions but as to overall effectiveness I think it needs improvement."
- "Under the current structure SAVAN generates more work in notifying our victims."
- "From the feedback I have received victims are most satisfied to have an effective system advising them with offender information."
- "Very impressed with the concept and the mechanics of notification."
- "Pretty good, needs to be constantly publicized in the media."

Thirty-two respondents (80%) suggested that negative consequences would result should the SAVAN network become inoperable or if funding for the system was withdrawn. The most devastating consequence would be the imposition of additional work for the local criminal justice agencies (22.5%) followed by a general negative impact on crime victims (17.5%) and a more specific jeopardizing of victim safety (12.5%). The following comments illustrate the respondents' thoughts regarding the dissolution of SAVAN.

- ❑ "If discontinued crime victims would lose a most valuable user-friendly system to keep them apprised of offenders' status."
- ❑ "Of course, the victims would feel more anxious and we would field many more calls."
- ❑ "If the funding for SAVAN was withdrawn it would have significant negative consequences for our district." With cuts we would not have the time and personnel to offer the service that SAVAN provides."

- “ We don’t have the manpower to address the victims’ rights statute without SAVAN. ”
- “ There is no way we could make all the notifications. ” The victims would have one more right taken away from them. ”
- “ We would be back to notifying on a haphazard system. ”
- “ The level of frustration of victims and criminal justice personnel would increase. ”

As part of the questionnaire survey participants were asked to elucidate their thoughts on permanent funding for SAVAN, specifically on whether the state legislature should provide continuation funding for the SAVAN network. Respondents were also encouraged to state why they felt continuation funding was needed or conversely, if opposed, why not. Respondents overwhelmingly supported the notion of legislative support for the SAVAN system with 86.8 percent agreeing that the General Assembly should explore the provision of permanent funding for SAVAN. Respondents, who supported this position, noted that it would improve the efficiency of the system, be beneficial for protecting victims, and that a permanent network is better than individuals having to make telephone calls. Respondents, in the minority, who disagreed with the concept of legislative support noted that funding would be better spent elsewhere and that they would only support funding if the network was improved. Comments supporting both positions included:

- ◆ “ Yes, to save lives. ”
- ◆ “ Absolutely, this system is unequaled in its ability to notify victims. ” “ It is far better than an individual officer attempting notification and it provides 24/7 access. ”
- ◆ “ Yes, they should, to continue to benefit victims and law enforcement agencies. ”
- ◆ “ It’s the right thing to do and taxpaying victims need this service. ”
- ◆ “ Money could be better spent in other areas, contact can be made by sheriff’s office and clerk’s office. ”
- ◆ “ Yes, many, many people benefit from its services – has potential to be a life saving tool. ”
- ◆ “ The General Assembly should not fund SAVAN since it is not being used in our county. ”
- ◆ “ Yes, yes, yes – they should for obvious reasons, it gives the power back to the victim. ”
- ◆ “ Yes, the state has said that it wants to protect victims. ”

- ◆ “ Yes, victims have been overlooked for way too long. ” An informed victim is a victim who can take necessary precautions when needed. ”
- ◆ “ Only if more training is provided. ” “ Once the kinks are ironed out and improvements are made then I would support permanent funding. ”

Victim Responses

Perhaps, the best test of any product or service is the extent to which its primary users or customers rate the efficacy of the service in terms of meeting their needs and expectations. The following section presents feedback from registered users, i.e. SAVAN's primary clientele – victims of crime and their families.

Court Notification Sample

A total of 41 respondents completed at least a majority of the phone survey, thus the results presented here will not always reflect 41 responses to each question with the number of responses received varying across the eight court notification survey questions.

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the SAVAN service prior to their particular case entering the criminal justice system. Of those who responded to this question 86 percent stated that they had no prior knowledge of SAVAN while the remaining 14 percent did acknowledge an awareness of this service prior to registering for feedback and updates on the status of their respective cases in the court system.

Sixty-nine percent of the victims in this subset reported that they obtained a thorough overview of SAVAN and its intended function prior to registration from either a law enforcement official or other state criminal justice employee.

Eight-six percent were satisfied with the service as related to the accuracy of the court dates that they received while the remaining 14 percent reported that they did not receive accurate court dates.

An overwhelming number of respondents (96.3%) stated that the notifications were made to the correct phone number with only one person responding negatively to this survey question. In a similar vein, 84.6 percent of the respondents noted that they did not receive false or inaccurate calls. A slightly higher number, 15.4 percent, did receive notification calls for cases which they did not register for nor request.

Eighty-eight percent of the survey respondents agreed that their respective notification calls were prompt and timely with only 12 percent reporting that they felt the calls were less than prompt.

A comparable eighty-eight percent stated that the SAVAN notification calls stopped immediately after they entered their PIN code indicating that the system is operating as expected. Three respondents (12%) suggested that the calls continued, after entering the proper PIN code, revealing some system dysfunction.

A full 80 percent of the victims in the court notification sample revealed that using the SAVAN system provided them with a sense of safety and security. Five (20%) survey participants reported that SAVAN did not provide them with this level of comfort.

Jail/Correctional Offender Movement Sample

A total of 42 respondents completed at least a majority of the phone survey, thus the results presented here will not always reflect 42 responses to each question with the number of responses received varying across the 11 offender movement survey questions.

Like the court notification sample, 81 percent of the respondents in this subset were not aware of SAVAN prior to their victimization with 19 percent stating that they did know about SAVAN before becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

The respondents were evenly split on the question of whether they received a thorough explanation of SAVAN prior to their registration event. Fifty percent reported that a thorough and complete explanation was provided by a law enforcement or state government official.

Fifty-four percent of the victims reported that they registered for SAVAN through an operator while the remaining 46 percent did not. Those survey participants, who did register in this manner, were asked to rate the operators on the extent to which they demonstrated a desire to help and on how responsive they were. Respondents were asked to rate the operators using a five point Likert type scale with one being the lowest or poorest level and five representing the highest level of support. The majority of the respondents (67%) reported the highest rating of five with the next most common rating being a four (14%). Fourteen percent described the operators' assistance as being neutral, or around the scale midpoint of 3, with only one respondent providing the lowest ranking of one.

Using the same five-point scale the respondents were asked to judge the SAVAN registration process on its clarity. Fifty percent assigned the highest ranking indicating that they found the registration process to be clear and straightforward. Twenty-one percent agreed by providing a rating at the next highest level with 13 percent assigning a scale midpoint score of three. Only six respondents (16 %) provided the lowest ratings, of one and two, suggesting that they did not find the registration process to be very clear and straightforward.

A similar distribution was obtained when the respondents were asked to rate the accuracy of the custody status information as provided through their respective notification calls. Fifty percent provided the highest rating, of five, suggesting that their custody status information was extremely accurate. Thirty-six percent provided a rating score of either a three or four while the

remaining 14 percent rated the accuracy of their status information as poor or not very accurate at all.

An overwhelming percentage of the respondents noted that their custody status notification calls were made to the correct phone number (94.6%) with a comparably high percentage also noting that they did not receive unsolicited calls or calls for which they had not registered (88.9%). Eighty-six percent also stated that their respective calls were prompt and timely. Seventy-one percent responded in the affirmative when asked if the notification calls stopped once they entered their appropriate PIN number. The remaining 29 percent noted that the calls did not stop indicative of system failure; a failure that was more pronounced in the custody status notification group as compared to the court notification sample.

Like the court notification subset the registered victims, in the custody status sample group, also reported a high level of perceived safety and security after registering and using SAVAN. Eighty-five percent reported that knowing the custody status of a specific offender provided them with a greater degree of security and a more pronounced level of perceived safety.

Discussion/ Policy Implications and Recommendations

The research findings clearly demonstrate a less than adequate awareness of the SAVAN system among both members of the criminal justice community and the general public. While 93 percent, of the surveyed criminal justice practitioners, noted some awareness of SAVAN within their respective communities only 34 percent described this awareness as being solid or strong. Among the registered SAVAN users over 80 percent were not aware of this notification system prior to becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

Recommendation # 1

Implement a more aggressive public relations campaign in order to increase SAVAN's visibility within both the criminal justice community and the general public at large. SAVAN and its intended purposes should be highlighted at local criminal justice conferences and workshops as well as being included or mentioned during the basic law enforcement training programs across the state. This campaign should also target victim-witness advocates and others who work in the victim assistance professions. Radio and television advertising should be considered as a means of increasing awareness among members of the general public.

Survey respondents documented the strong utility of SAVAN and the research demonstrates its cost effectiveness when compared to establishing and maintaining notification programs at the local level. Should SAVAN cease to exist local governments could expect to pay roughly \$85,000 each per year in order to notify their residents as mandated by the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights. Statewide this would cost over \$12 million per year compared to the current cost of slightly more than \$1 million for maintaining and operating a single and centralized state notification system.

Recommendation # 2

Given the benefits and efficacy of the SAVAN system, as well as its associated cost savings, legislation should be drafted and introduced which would in effect provide sustained funding for the statewide SAVAN system. Detailed fiscal notes should be included which would delineate revenue sources such as increasing court costs for offenders or adding a SAVAN surcharge to the marriage license and divorce filing fees.

Despite the reported benefits of SAVAN, and its strong utility for assisting crime victims, over half of the respondents noted the existence of technical problems or “glitches” in the system and in the mechanics of notifying victims about SAVAN and how to use it to its maximum potential. Examples included delays in data entry, system downtime and victims who did not fully understand how to access and use the system.

Recommendation # 3

An in-depth study should be conducted in order to further identify and explore these technical problems within the system as well as the mechanical aspects of better informing SAVAN users on the system and its operations. This research study identified some problems but was limited in that it did not determine the frequency of these problems nor their magnitude or scope. More work is needed in order to determine how widespread each technical problem is and how often they occur.